APRIL

The Benefits of Eggs & Food for Fertility

SUSTAINABLE DISH

Diana Rodgers, RD

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Spring is an exciting season to me, full of possibilities. For many around the world, the month of April means celebrations of rebirth and fertility. This month, I'm focusing on eggs and fertility in my download. I'll explain why pasture-raised eggs are worth the extra cost, how to make your own naturally dyed Easter eggs, recipes for easy peel hard boiled eggs, and talk about a new book, Real Food for Fertility, by my good friend and dietitian Lily Nichols.

THE BENEFITS OF EGGS

No longer do nutritionists and doctors shy away from recommending eggs. In fact, cholesterol, which is the main reason eggs were feared during the low fat craze during the 80's and 90's is "no longer a nutrient of concern" according to the US Dietary Guidelines. Eggs are incredibly healthy. They contain high-quality protein, vitamins (such as B12, riboflavin, and folate), minerals (like selenium, phosphorus, and iron), and healthy fats, including omega-3 fatty acids. Eggs provide all nine essential amino acids, making them a complete protein source. Protein is crucial for building and repairing tissues, maintaining muscle mass, and supporting various metabolic functions. Eggs are one of the best dietary sources of choline, an essential nutrient important for brain health, liver function, and fetal development during pregnancy. Eggs are also low in calories and highly satiating, meaning they help you feel full and satisfied, which can aid in weight management by reducing overall calorie intake.

They're also being studied as an important contribution to childhood nutrition, reducing stunting in low-income countries. The "One-Egg-Per-Day" study in Burkina Faso showed tremendous improvements in physical and behavioral factors when families were given chickens and told to give their young children one egg every day.

SHOULD I BUY PASTURE RAISED EGGS?

There are a lot of confusing terms when it comes to eggs. Many people ask me if it's really better to seek out pasture-raised eggs and my answer is a definite yes. Ideally, find a local egg producer who raises their chickens in mobile coops, moving their chickens to a fresh patch of land frequently. It's fine if they also feed their chickens grain, however see if you can find someone that uses non-gmo, organic grain. Because chickens are monogastric animals (one stomach) like humans, what they eat has a very direct impact on their eggs and meat. Pasture-raised eggs do cost more, but in my opinion, the price difference is definitely worth it because of the many benefits these eggs provide.

More Ethical

This technique mimics their natural diet, which includes fresh bugs and greens. They get fresh air and move around as they please. The chickens are less crowded so less "arguing" occurs, which means the animals are less stressed than confined chickens. Feather-pulling and pecking can occur when chickens are in close quarters. Our pastured chickens get a variety of seeds, grass, insects, worms and I've even seen them eat mice!

Better for the Environment

As the birds are scratching at the ground and leaving their "droppings" this fertilizes the soil. CAFO (Confined Animal Feeding Operation) chickens pollute the air, water and soil with the large amounts of waste produced. The air inside even "cage free" operations can be very thick with the stench of urea. As we rotate our chickens often, there is never a toxic build up of waste.

Higher Nutrient Content

According to a study done in 2007 by Mother Earth News which tested 14 pastured flocks and compared it to the USDA "conventional" eggs, pastured eggs contained on average 2/3 more vitamin A, 2 times more omega-3 fatty acids, 3 times more vitamin E and 7 times more beta carotene. Other studies mentioned in the Mother Earth article show up 13 times higher omega-3 fatty acid ratio, 50 percent more folic acid, and 70 percent more vitamin B12. I'm currently looking into a grant which will pay for me to test my pastured eggs against conventional eggs from the grocery store as USDA nutritional data can sometimes be outdated.

Know Your Terms

There are lots of different ways to raise chickens and some of the terms can be confusing to the public. The typical eggs sold in most grocery stores come from chickens raised in cramped cages and usually given antibiotics. Artificial lights are often used to increase egg productivity. Conditions are stressful, cramped, and the air in these facilities is thick with dust and ammonia. In some areas of Europe, this technique is banned.

"Cage Free" or "Free Roaming" doesn't really mean much. These chickens simply were not in small cages but are typically raised indoors in crowded conditions. Also there is no guarantee they weren't given antibiotics or fed anything other than grain.

"Free Range" can mean they're pastured eggs, or it can mean that there is a little door available to the chickens, whether or not they go outside. There might be grass or concrete on the other side of that door. There is no guarantee that they are getting any different food than CAFO birds.

"Fed Vegetarian Feed, All-Natural, Farm Fresh" just means they were fed grain and possibly other vegetable matter but they did not get access to the outside. In fact, these words mean nothing as far as the care of the chickens and most of the time, they are raised in cages just like the classic grocery store eggs.

"Omega-3 eggs" might have more omega-3's from some additional flax seeds in their grain mix, but beware of thinking these are eggs from birds who saw the outdoors.

One interesting fact is that it's difficult to peel hard boiled eggs which are freshly laid. The longer the egg sits, the larger the air sack between the white and the shell. Fresh eggs are extremely difficult to peel because they are so fresh. You'll also notice that pasture-raised eggs have a deep orange yolk, the yolks are rounder and firmer, and the taste is richer. Well nourished chicken egg shells are also very firm, indicating that the chicken has good mineral stores.

Easy Peel Hard Boiled One Day Old Pastured Eggs

Ingredients

- 6 eggs
- 1 TBS salt
- 2 tsp baking soda

Directions

1. In a medium sized saucepan, place 6 eggs, salt and baking soda.
2. Bring to just to a boil then reduce the heat and allow to lightly simmer for 12 minutes.
3. Place the pot in the sink and drain the water.
4. Shake the pot so the egg shells crack and add cold water.
5. Allow to sit for at least five minutes or until the eggs are cool.
6. Peel the eggs.
7. Compost the shells. Egg-cellent looking hard boiled eggs. They have no taste of baking soda at all.

Want an easy recipe for hard boiled eggs? Check out Nom Nom Paleo's "Lazy Devils" here.

Bone Health: Is Calcium the Right Focus?

Is calcium actually good for your bone health?

Bad news...and good news...

In one of the largest bone health studies ever, women who took calcium and vitamin D every day were **no less likely** to break their hips...

Meanwhile, a recent study found that women who ate THIS protein for 6 months **gained 7% more bone density**... Which is how much density the average person loses in SIX YEARS!

*Eat THIS protein if you want stronger bones

NATURALLY DYED EASTER EGGS

I love creating, especially with natural objects. That's why, when I decided to write The Homegrown Paleo Cookbook, I wanted to include some fun projects for people to do, that don't involve baking trays of sugary junk food or using store bought kits.

These naturally beautiful pastel eggs are so much lovelier than the sparkly neon eggs made from the kits that flood drugstores around Easter. There is an important lesson to be learned here: **there is beauty in the imperfect**. These eggs turn out speckled and sometimes have odd spots or blotches, and each one is unique and gorgeous. My kids were particularly surprised to see how red cabbage leaves made the eggs beautifully blue. Who needs chemical kits, jelly beans and cheap chocolate bunnies when you can color eggs at home with common kitchen items?

You Will Need

- White eggs
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 3 cups water
- Medium saucepan
- Needle or small nail (optional)

For the colors

- Speckled pink: 1 cup raspberries
- Deep blue: 1 cup blueberries
- Deep golden yellow: 3 tablespoons turmeric
- Olive green: 1 big handful grass
- Light grey: 1 cup cherries
- Robin's-egg blue: 5 leaves red cabbage
- Brownish red: 3 red beets
- Pale orange: 4 yellow onion skins

If you want to eat the eggs after you color them, boil them in a medium saucepan for 1 minute, remove from heat, then cover and let sit for 10 to 12 minutes. Then run the eggs under cold water or cool in an ice bath for 5 minutes.

Alternatively, you can boil the eggs right in the pot with the colorant, which imparts a texture on the eggs (grass did this particularly well) and produces a deeper color.

Next, combine the vinegar, salt, water, and desired colorant in a medium saucepan and boil for 10 minutes.

If you aren't boiling the eggs with the colorant, after 10 minutes, strain out the colorant and let the liquid cool, then add the eggs.

Once you're happy with the color of the eggs, remove them from the liquid. If you haven't hard-boiled your eggs, blow out the centers so that they will keep longer: Poke a hole in each end of the egg with a needle or small nail, insert the needle or nail to mix together the yolk and white, and then blow out the center. This process yields a paler color, but you'll be able to collect the eggs from year to year.

Coat the dyed eggs in coconut oil if you'd like to give them a slight shine. It's really a fun process!

Tip: If you're using beets as the colorant, leave the eggs in the dye for about 1 hour for a light red color. The longer you leave them in, the deeper brown they turn.

Check out my book, The Homegrown Paleo Cookbook, for more fun crafts like making beeswax candles and goat milk soap, plus great recipes and a complete guide to growing your own healthy food.

Electrolytes Matter while Pregnant or Breastfeeding

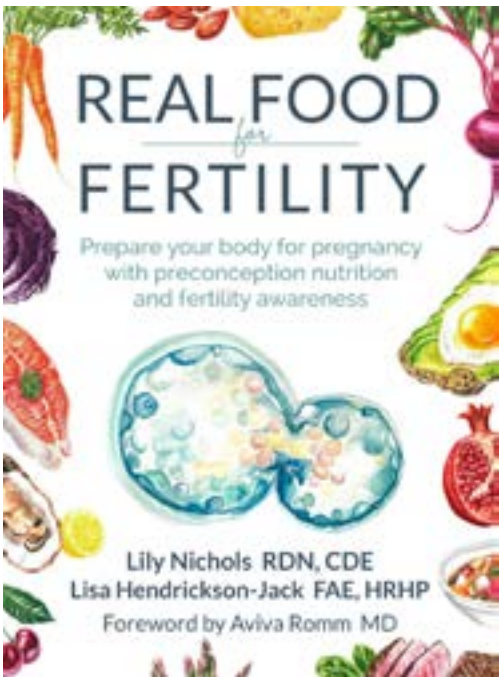
Electrolytes are minerals that conduct electrical charges in your body, maintain fluid balance, aid in blood flow, regulate blood pressure, build bone, and influence a wide range of hormones. As with most other nutrients, electrolyte needs increase during pregnancy and nursing. Enter LMNT. LMNT has your electrolyte needs covered. With 1,000 mg of sodium, 200 mg of potassium, and 60 mg of magnesium, it contains enough electrolytes to move the needle towards each of these electrolyte goals. You're also guaranteed to find an LMNT flavor you love.

Click here to get a free sample pack with your order!

LOOKING TO GET PREGNANT? DIET IS KEY

Here are a few reasons why:

- Supports optimal egg and sperm health
- Regulates the menstrual cycle and supports hormonal balance
- Supports healthy cervical mucus production (key for the survival of sperm on its journey to fertilize the egg)
- Ensures ample endometrial development (for the early embryo to securely implant)
- Promotes the formation of a functional placenta with robust vasculature to transfer nutrients from mother to baby (this is a delicate dance reliant upon a healthy egg, healthy sperm, a healthy endometrium, and a healthy mother)
- May reduce the risk of certain pregnancy complications by better supporting the body's physiological adaptation to the stresses of pregnancy
- Buffers nutrient losses during pregnancy and mitigates the often lower nutrient intake in early pregnancy (due to nausea and food aversions)
- Lowers the risk of nutrient depletion postpartum



"Real Food for Fertility" is a comprehensive guidebook authored by Lily Nichols, RD. It emphasizes the crucial role of diet and lifestyle choices in optimizing fertility for both men and women. The book provides evidence-based recommendations and practical advice on how to enhance fertility naturally through wholesome, nutrient-rich foods and healthy lifestyle habits.

Key points covered in "Real Food for Fertility" include:

- How your nutrient intake and lifestyle choices affect your menstrual cycles, hormone balance, risk for fertility challenges, and more
- Why common fertility nutrition advice is often ineffective — and sometimes detrimental to overall fertility
- What both ancestral practices and modern research suggests is optimal for female and male fertility when it comes to macronutrients, micronutrients, meal timing/spacing, and much more
- Specific recommendations for nutrient-dense foods to emphasize as well as foods/ingredients to avoid to support both female and male fertility
- Examination of popular diets and their effects on fertility, including the Mediterranean diet and vegetarian or vegan diets
- How to use your menstrual cycle as a vital sign and apply fertility awareness to improve your chances of conception
- Considerations for coming off of hormonal contraceptives (such as 'the pill') in advance of conception and the importance of planning for post-pill nutrient repletion
- Detailed information on egg and sperm quality (there's a chapter on each!)
- Specific information about navigating common fertility challenges, including: polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), hypothalamic amenorrhea (HA), thyroid issues, endometriosis, fibroids, recurrent miscarriage, and much more!
- Detailed information on egg and sperm quality (there's a chapter on each!)

- Recommendations for lab tests and supplements to help you and your provider develop a customized plan
- How to mitigate the harmful effects of toxins on fertility
- A complete preconception checklist to easily organize and apply the information from the book
- A week of delicious fertility-supportive meal plans and corresponding recipes for you and your partner

Read the first chapter for free here

SUSTAINABLE DISH

DIANA RODGERS, RD

Diana Rodgers, RD, is a "real food" nutritionist and sustainability advocate near Boston, Massachusetts. She's an author of three books, runs a clinical nutrition practice, hosts the Sustainable Dish Podcast, and has served as an advisory board of numerous nutrition and agriculture organizations including Whole30, Animal Welfare Approved and Savory Institute. She speaks internationally about the intersection of optimal human nutrition and regenerative agriculture.

Diana is co-author of, Sacred Cow: The Case for (Better) Meat and the director, producer of the companion film, Sacred Cow. Her new initiative, the Global Food Justice Alliance, advocates for a nutritious, sustainable and equitable worldwide food system.

▸ Learn more at www.globalfoodjustice.org